

to a crossroads a few year ago, it was Gene who brought the community together on a Thanksgiving weekend to lobby for the hospital's completion. I am sure he is proud to see the new hospital and its award-winning cardiovascular services up and running.

Gene Huff is not only a well-rounded man but a well-educated one as well. He enrolled in Sue Bennett Junior College in London in the fall of 1952, beginning a pursuit of higher education that would continue over a period of 25 years. He finished Sue Bennett in 1954 and earned a bachelor's degree from Union College in Barbourville, KY, in 1960. His master's degree was earned at Morehead State University in Morehead, KY, in 1976. He also earned an educational specialist degree there in 1977. He pursued further graduate work at the University of Kentucky. In 1999 Gene was awarded an honorary doctor of public education degree from Union College.

Gene turned 82 years old a month ago, and I certainly hope he took the happy occasion of his birthday to look back proudly at a life filled with achievement. The number of lives he has touched, whether through his preaching, his public service or his warm and steady presence among family and friends cannot be counted.

I had the pleasure of talking to Gene on the phone a few days ago and we got to reminisce about old times. I wanted him to know I was thinking of him and that I am proud of him for his decades of service to his community, to the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and to God.

It is an honor to come to Washington to represent Kentuckians such as the Rev. Gene Huff. I am sure no one could be prouder of Gene than his wife, Ethel; their five children, Arlene, Martin, Marsha, Anna Marie, and Jeanie; their 19 grandchildren, their 7 great-grandchildren, and many other beloved family members and friends.

I would ask my Senate colleagues to join me in recognizing Rev. Gene Huff for his lifetime of accomplishment. Kentucky is honored to call him one of our own, and I am honored to call him my friend.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for up to 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the second half.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I wish to ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Montana, Mr. TESTER, the Senator from Louisiana, Ms. LANDRIEU, and the Senator from Connecticut, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and I have unanimous consent to engage during majority morning business time in a colloquy.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### PELL GRANTS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. We have just passed through a very significant landmark in this country which is that student debt, the burden of college loan debt Americans have to carry, broke through \$1 trillion. That is \$1 trillion in debt. And because of the laws that have been set up to favor the banks, in particular in this Congress, the debt is not dischargeable in bankruptcy. That is a \$1 trillion burden on folks who required loans to get through college that they can never shake off that is going to stay with them for their lives, for as long as it takes to pay it down even when things don't work out for them. So it is a very significant milestone when it hits \$1 trillion of this particular kind of very onerous debt.

One of the responses to it is the Pell grant.

The Pell grant helps people who can't afford college have the chance to go to college. It helps them pay their way through college, and it does so without leaving that burden of debt behind. It is named after Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island, a Senator and a man who was very important to me in my life and in my development as a political figure in Rhode Island. He was a very dear friend and went almost inexplicably out of his way for me on many different occasions. I am deeply indebted to him. But I am also extremely proud to represent Rhode Island in the Senate and to represent a State that produced Senator Claiborne Pell and, particularly as we face this massive burden of debt, to come to the floor to participate in this colloquy in support of the Pell grant.

I will turn to my colleague, Senator TESTER, in one moment. First, I wish to say how important this is to individual people who wouldn't have the chance otherwise. I was at the University of Rhode Island just a few weeks ago. I met a woman named Amber, who is 29 years old. She is not the standard "come out of high school and go on to college" student. She is actually a mom. She has two kids. She works full time and she goes to school full time and she is the mother of two kids. This is a very busy person and a very energetic and capable person. The only way she can make things work in her life and enable her to be a full-time mom,

a full-time employee, and a full-time student is because the Pell grant that she gets bridges the gap between what she can earn, what she can borrow, what she has to pay, and gives her the chance to move into the college-educated status.

As we know from looking at this recession we are in right now, there are two economies in America. There is an economy for college-educated people—an economy in which the top unemployment rate is below 5 percent—and then there is the economy for people who have not had the benefit and the good fortune of a college education, for whom unemployment is nearly twice as high and for whom the suffering brought on by the Wall Street meltdown and the subsequent recession has been much more acute.

I will turn now to Senator TESTER. I appreciate so much that he has come to join us today to help our colleagues, I hope, come to the realization that cutting Pell grants as we face our debt and our deficit problem would be a wild mistake, a terrible mistake, would undercut the progress we are trying to make, and would be one of the worst places to go for spending cuts. Even though I admit we need to make them, the Pell grant is the wrong place to look.

I yield to my distinguished colleague, Senator TESTER.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Rhode Island. We appreciate his leadership on the issue of Pell grants. I very much appreciate the opportunity to address Pell grants and what they mean to not only our young people and to the folks who are being retrained to find different lines of work with the economic slowdown but also to our economy in general overall.

If we are going to go to an institution of higher learning at this point in time, it takes money. If Pell grants are reduced or potentially even taken away, as some want, it takes away that opportunity. It takes away that opportunity for upward mobility within our society, within the economy. Without education, if a person is born poor, that person is liable to stay poor. Without education, if a person wants to improve their quality of life, it becomes much more difficult.

When I meet with students, both traditional and nontraditional, around the State of Montana, the first question they ask me or one of the first questions is, What is the Federal Government doing to make college affordable? Because if one is unfortunate enough to be born without economic means, these Pell grants are critically important to be able to allow people—students, young people, folks who need to be retrained—to go to college and get that training, thereby adding to our economy and enabling them to get a better job and potentially become business owners and down the line.

Why is this important? It is because Pell grants have been under attack in the House.